

Unit of Study: Small Moments, Primary
Content Overview
Wendy Craig

Unit Length: 4 weeks

Introduction – Small moments writing allows students to explode a moment in time and add concrete details that animate their text. Through the teaching of small moments writing, students learn to avoid the “bed to bed” stories that bore readers by telling rather than showing.

Mentor Text List:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Joshua’s Night Whispers | • The Art Lesson |
| • A Chair For My Mother | • Peter’s Chair |
| • Shortcuts (Crews) | • Roxaboxen |
| 2 Pairs of Shoes | • Fireflies |
| • Snowy Day | • Big Mama’s Rollercoaster |
| • Painting the Wind | • Paperboy |
| • Lily’s Purple Plastic Purse | • Fireflies for Nathan |
| • Crab Moon | • Winter at Long Pond |
| • Owl Moon | • North County Night |

Week by Week Overview:

Week 1: Strategy: Stretching the Moment
Mentor Text: Owl Moon

Week 2: Strategy: Identifying Details
Mentor Text: Snowy Day

Week 3: Strategy: Stretching the Moment with Detail
Mentor Text: A Chair for My Mother

Week 4: Students work on their own Small Moments stories in a 4 page book

Unit of Study: Small Moments

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Background Experiences:

“Zoom,” by Istvan Banyai

In preparation for this first grade unit on Small Moments, students are immersed in daily writing via writer’s notebooks, power writing, mentor sentences, and personal narratives beginning very early in the school year. Zoom is used as a vehicle to introduce the concept of zooming in to a small moment, and binoculars are used in the classroom to illustrate the concept further. Students become comfortable and skilled at “reading like writers” and identifying writer’s crafts. They participate in many experiences with modeled writing, both *oral and written*; shared writing; independent writing; and bookmaking. I begin this unit of study after students have been taught the concept of small moments through the above activities.

Week 1: “Owl Moon,” by Jane Yolen

- Read the story first for pure enjoyment. Turn off the classroom lights and read with an expressive and dramatic voice to add to the mental images that will be created. Ask the students to recall the details the writer used to create such a vivid picture in the readers’ minds.
- Revisit the book another day. Ask the children to recall what the book was about (simply a boy’s nighttime walk in the woods with his father)
- Discuss specific writing strategies, guiding the students to identify Yolen’s use of a first person narrative, strong verbs and descriptive words, sensory language, onomatopoeia, and the extremely narrow focus of the story.
- Chart the writer’s craft (What is the writer doing? Why is the writer doing this?)
- Focus on the 2-page passage when they enter the woods. Guide the students to identify this as a “*small moment*,” and discuss how the writer stretched that moment out so the reader really feels like he or she is there in the woods with them.

Week 2: “The Snowy Day,” by Ezra Jack Keats

- Read the story *without showing the pictures*, asking the students to close their eyes and listen carefully to the words as they create a picture of the story in their minds.
- Ask the children to remember the details the writer included that helped them to imagine the story.
- Read the story again, this time showing the pictures and concentrating on the descriptive details, sound words, and other strategies the writer used to stretch out Peter’s walk in the snow, such as hyphenating the word s-l-o-w-l-y

- Revisit the pages that describe Peter walking through the snow, “crunch, crunch, crunch.” Identify the details that Ezra Jack Keats included to create a picture in the reader’s mind.
- Chart the writer’s craft.
- Tell the children that they will write their own small moment stories about a snowy day or a rainy day. Share a few oral examples, showing how details can be provided to stretch a small moment into a story.
- Invite children to pair/share their own ideas for details to include in a small moment story about a winter day. Ask for volunteers to share with the group.
- Provide lined paper for a story to accompany an art project, if desired.
- Students peer conference to share, edit, and revise their finished stories. (See student examples, pages 1-2).

Week 3: “A Chair for My Mother,” by Vera B. Williams

- Read the story for pure enjoyment one day
- Re-visit it another day and invite the students to identify craft used by the writer. Discuss the craft orally, charting them if desired.
- Identify the small moment described as the mother and child are walking home
- Read that 2-page passage slowly, inviting children to notice how Vera B. Williams *stretched* the moment out with details.
- Guide the children to recall the details she included as the child and her mother walked to their home
- Tell the class you think you could tell a “small moment” story, and give a few oral examples:
 - I walked down the stairs to breakfast. The sun was streaming in the window and I could hear birds chirping outside. My cat, M.J. purred and rubbed against my leg as I bent down to scratch him behind the ears. I glanced at the morning paper, saw that the Chargers are going up against the Cardinals this Sunday, and thought, “I sure hope we win!” Reaching for the milk and my cereal bowl, I settled down to eat.
 - We walked in the door when the bell rang. My friends hurried to put away coats and homework and take their seats as they heard Mrs. Brown’s voice came over the intercom. I noticed that Walter lost a tooth and realized that it must be Chris’ birthday because his chair had the birthday seat on it. We put our hands on our hearts to pledge our allegiance to the flag and then got out our Daily Math folders. It was time to begin our day!

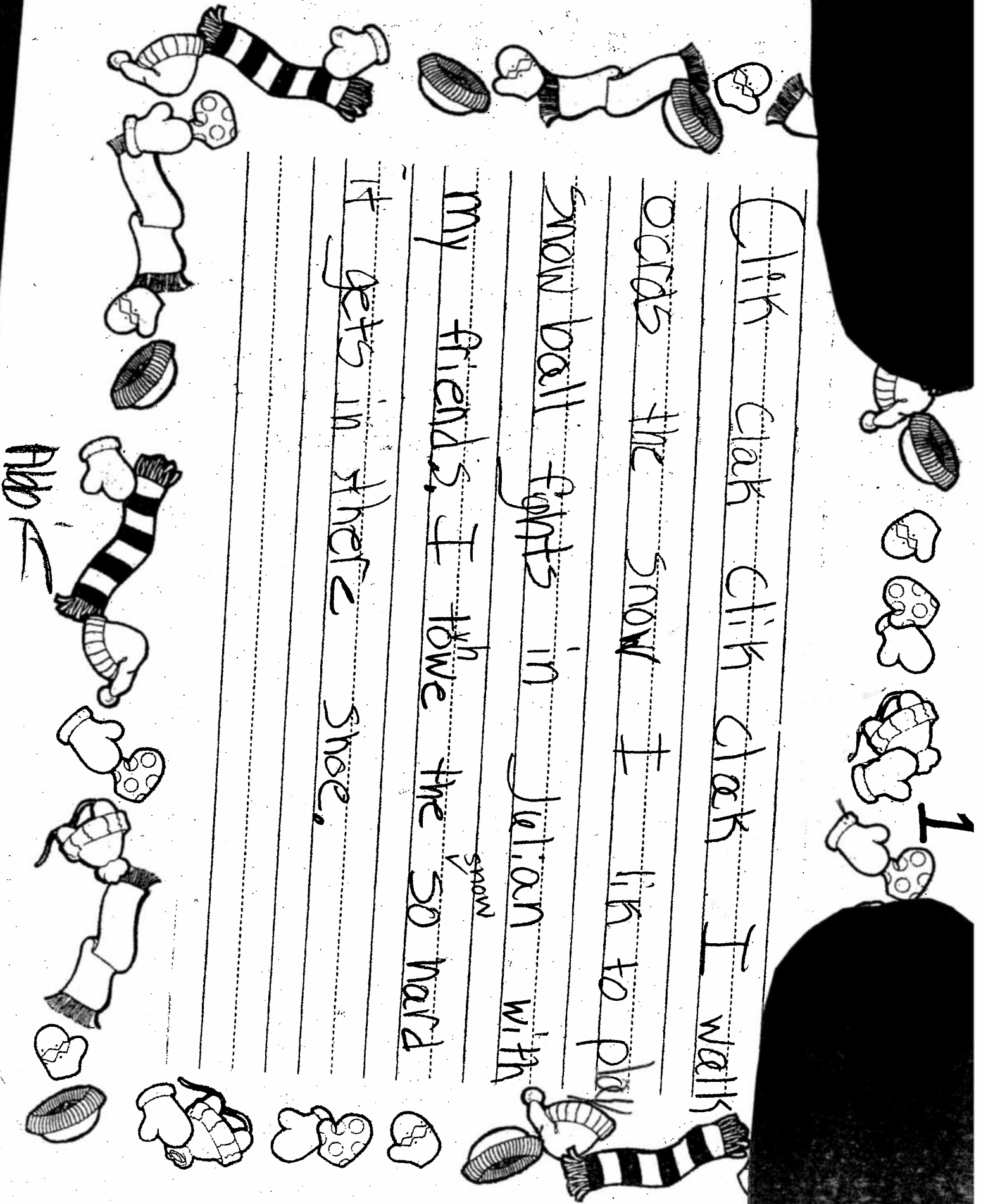
- Tell the children that today they will think of their own small moment to write about in a book. They will stretch the moment out over 4 pages. Frontload by suggesting that their small moment stories could be about almost anything, like scoring a goal at a soccer game, diving into a pool or waves, jumping on a trampoline, snuggling by the fire with a parent, playing with a pet, or walking to school with a friend.... Ask for volunteers to share their ideas with the group.
- Pass out book pages as each child identifies their topics. This way, you are sure they are ready to write when they go to their desks.

Week 4: Student Make Their Own Small Moments Books

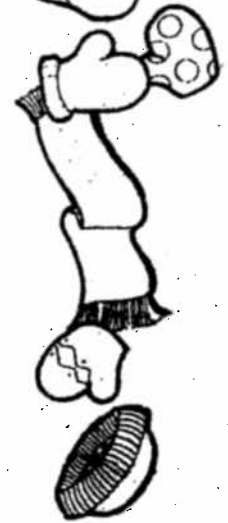
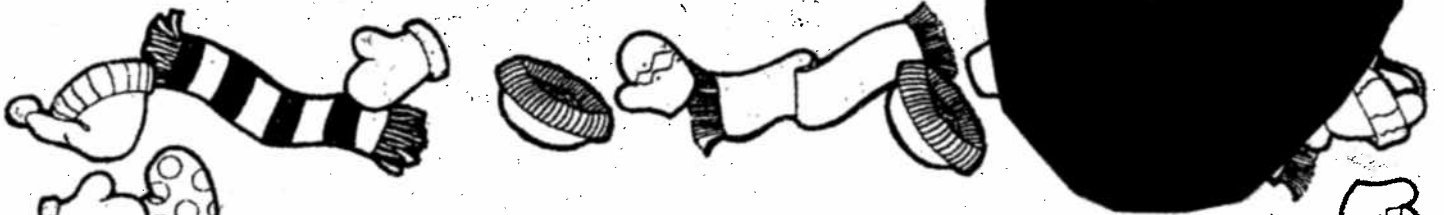
- Students create their own small moment stories by making a four page book. (See student example, pages 3-4).
- Student Checklist for revision and assessment (page 5).

Note: Attached (pages 6-8) see student examples that show how students independently incorporate this craft into their writing on a District Benchmark Writing Assessment two months after teaching this unit.

Click clack click clack I walk
across the snow I like to play
snow ball fights in Jean with
my friends. I love the ^{snow} so hard
it gets in there shoe.



Drop drop drop when the
rain. I love the rain do you?
We like to splash in the
puddles. When I go in the puddles
I get my self wet but I don't
care!





My boots

are red and

they have

lightning

boots



I slipped on

my boots. My

knees got stuck

but I kept

falling. I got



my heels in.

My feet were

warmed & red

squaggy. I

felt good.



because my

moth usually

picks my shoes

but now I

get a pick.

My First Grade Writing Checklist – Small Moments

Did I remember these things in my writing?	Check when complete
I began with an interesting “ hook ” to interest my reader.	
I included a topic sentence that tells the reader what I am writing about.	
I made sure all my details describe my topic.	
I painted a picture with my words to tell how things look, sound, feel, or smell .	
I talked with my pencil so the reader can hear my voice .	
I ended with a conclusion that tells how I think or feel about my topic.	
I used a capital letter at the beginning of each sentence.	
I used a period (.), question mark (?), or exclamation point (!) to end each sentence.	
I spelled the words I know correctly.	
I used my neatest printing .	

Name _____

by

a snowy day

I woke up and looked

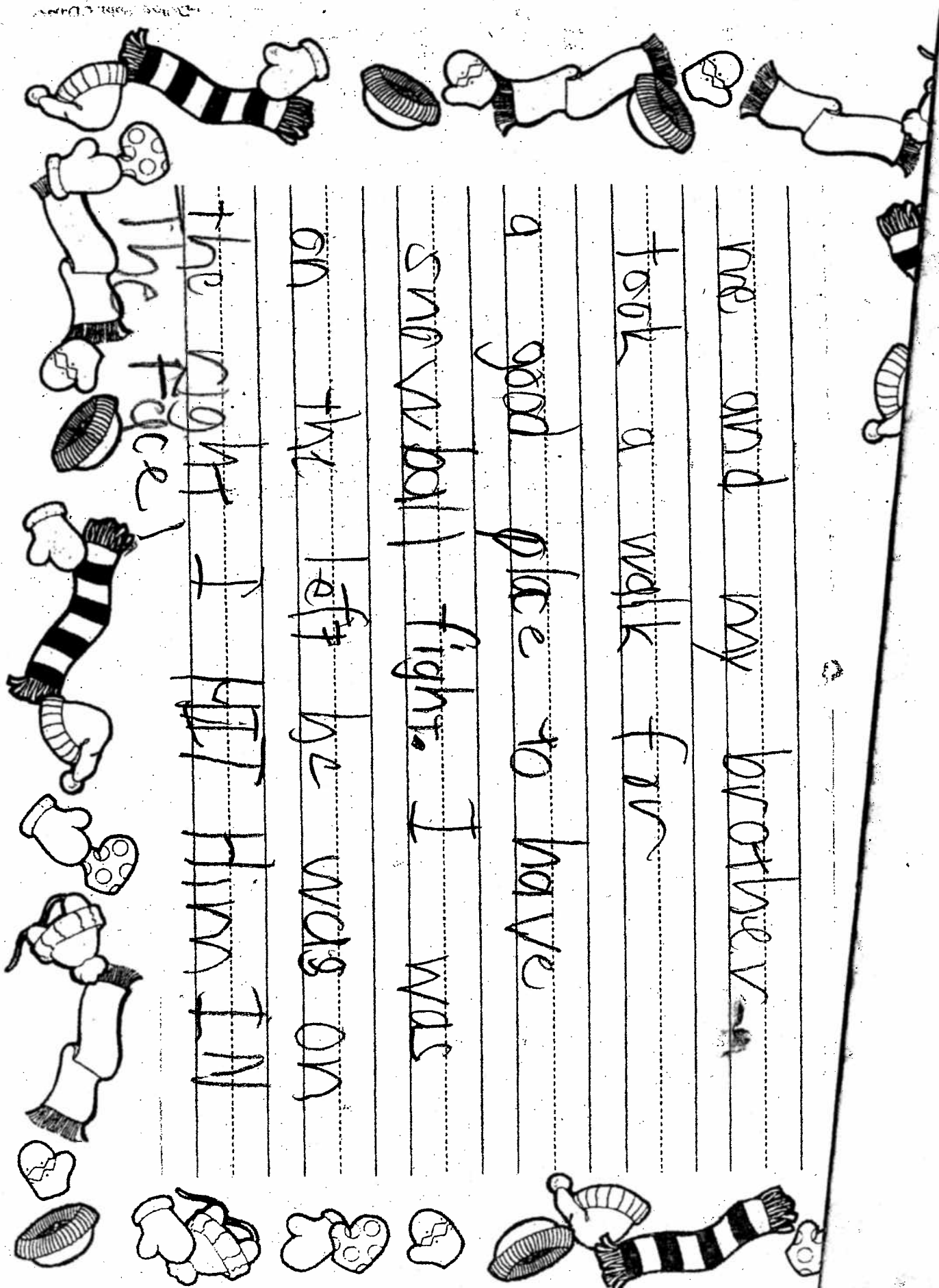
out the window the

streets were filled

with snow big snow

piles

me and my brother
took a walk for
a good place to have
snowball fights. I was on
the left he was on
the right I hit him in
the face.



Saturday Over the fair day weekend I got a tether ball court.

I hit the ball so hard I got it pasted my sister and I

won at my first game. The tether ball was rubbing my hand

why I was hitting it and I could feel the sun shining.

above us. I could hear the the bicycling behind us on the

trees. ~~Every morning~~ When I woke up in the morning I came downstairs

and asked if I could play tether ball in my pajamas and

I played and played until it was breckfast. I loved that

day when I got a tether ball cart!